

Projected Project Costs

Prior to the hearing on a special assessment district ordinance, the City Engineering staff will provide a projected cost estimate. Remember, a detailed design and the letting of the contract cannot be accomplished until the district is approved by Council.

This estimate is based on previous bid prices by private contractors and field inspections for projects similar to the one being proposed. Call 441-7581 to obtain more information about this estimate.

The District

Special assessment districts in many cases are an outward sign of Lincoln's increasing population. Often these districts involve new subdivisions, but districts also are formed in older, more established neighborhoods.

In each case, however, the proposed district would call for an improvement that will benefit certain property owners. The limits of the district indicate these properties. The benefited property owners within the limits of the special assessment district pay for the improvement if the district is approved and constructed.

Normally, the improvement called for in the special assessment district is requested by a citizen or a group of citizens. While the City does have the authority to request a special assessment district, it seldom does so.

There may be some citizens who support an assessment district, and others may oppose it. Therefore, the district procedures were established to give citizens an opportunity to voice their opinions.

Written Comments

Do you have an opinion on a special assessment district, but your schedule doesn't permit you to attend a public hearing? You can submit your opinion in writing. Send the comment letter to: Lincoln City Council, 555 S 10th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508; or, via the Council's e-mail address: council@lincoln.ne.gov.

Did You Know...

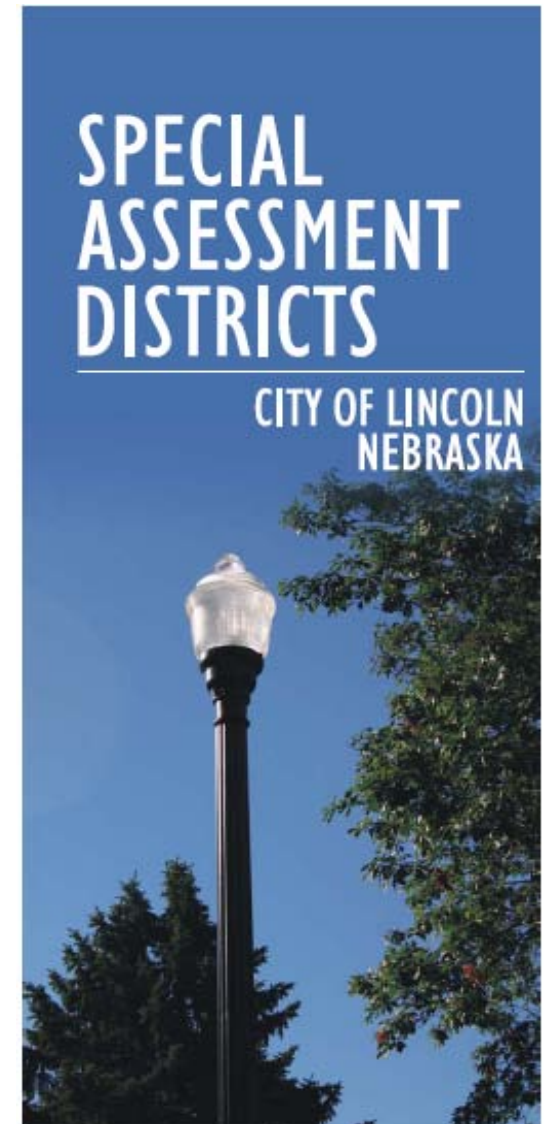
It may take three or more months to have an alley graveled because of the procedures involved in establishing a special assessment district. There is a quicker way. Property owners can purchase the gravel, and City crews will spread it. Prior to purchasing the gravel, call the Street and Traffic Operations Division at 441-7701 to make arrangements to have it spread. Under the procedures for a district, the cost of graveling would be assessed to all property owners abutting the alley. Using this method, only those property owners who are willing to cooperate would pay.



Initially, it may seem less expensive to gravel a street, as compared to paving. But consider that the average life of a graveled street is two to four years, depending upon the amount of traffic using the street. A paved residential street may last 25 years or more. Each time a street is graveled, property owners will have to pay. So, in the long run, it may benefit property owners to have the street paved.



In some instances, the City Council can order the construction of a paving district, even though a majority of the front footage is not obtained. However, the district under consideration must meet certain criteria, and an attempt must have been made to establish the district through normal procedures. Contact the Engineering Services office at 441-7581 for more information.



How Districts Are Created

The following is a step-by-step explanation of the procedures involved in establishing a special assessment district:

1. One or more interested individuals may request the creation of a special assessment district by submitting an informal letter request to the City Clerk.
2. The City Clerk forwards the informal letters to the City Council and they refer it to the City Engineer's office. This office prepares the ordinance required to create the district. After the ordinance is introduced and a date for a public hearing on the ordinance is established, public hearing notices are sent to the property owners within the limits of the special assessment districts. The notice states when the public hearing will be held and the type of district being proposed. The notice also states that an assessment to the property is proposed. A Special Assessments Revolving Committee reviews requests for district creation and makes a recommendation to the City Council on whether the district should be approved. The committee's recommendation includes a consideration of fund availability.
3. The ordinance is introduced at the Lincoln City Council meeting where it is "read" at three successive meetings. The second reading is a public hearing. Discussion of the ordinance is open to all interested persons wishing to appear for or against the proposed district. Citizens also may present written opinions to the Council. These written statements should be presented to the City Council Secretary prior to the third reading of the ordinance.
4. Normally, the ordinance is passed or denied at the third reading. If it passes, the district is established, and the ordinance becomes effective 15 days after passage. However, the Mayor can veto ordinances passed by the Council.

5. After the ordinance becomes effective, a resolution is prepared authorizing the City Engineer's office to prepare plans and let a contract for the construction of the improvement. This resolution will receive a City Council public hearing. The resolution will appear on the Lincoln City Council agenda which is published in the Sunday Lincoln Journal Star and on the City Web site at lincoln.ne.gov. In most cases, a resolution will be voted on by the Council on the same day as the public hearing. On paving and ornamental street lighting districts, this resolution is not introduced until these projects meet additional requirements. Those additional steps are below.

Paving and Ornamental Lighting Districts Only

- 5a. Once an ordinance creating a paving or ornamental lighting district becomes effective, formal, notarized petitions representing more than 50 percent of the total front footage along the intended improvement must be obtained. These formal petitions must be signed by property owners as they are shown in the County Register of Deeds office. The signing of these petitions must be initiated by interested individuals. Generally, the City of Lincoln will not contact property owners to secure the proper amount of front footage. The formal petition blanks and instructions for completing them can be obtained from the City Engineer's office on its Web site.
- 5b. The formal petitions must be submitted to the City Clerk. The City Attorney's office checks the petitions for accuracy of ownership and legal description. The petitions are then forwarded to the City Engineer's office to determine if sufficient frontage has been obtained. The status of a project may be checked by calling 441-7581.
- 5c. Once formal petitions representing more than 50 percent of the frontage are received, a resolution is prepared and acted on by the City Council ordering the district constructed. This resolution gives the City Engineer's office authority to prepare plans and give a contract for the construction of the improvement.

Additional Procedures for All Districts

6. Following the completion of construction, the City Engineer's office will calculate a proposed cost distribution to the properties within the special assessment district. The City Council then passes an assessment resolution adopting the proposed distribution and establishes a date for a review by the City Council sitting as the Board of Equalization.
7. The Lincoln City Council, sitting as the Board of Equalization, then holds a public hearing to review and resolve any complaints property owners may have concerning their assessment. Prior to the hearing, notices announcing the date of the hearing are sent to the owners. Individuals who have questions on the amount or details on an assessment may call 441-7581. The assessments are then levied, and an **interest rate** is established.
8. When the Board of Equalization approves an assessment, the amount may be paid in one lump sum, or the payment may be spread over a period of years with **interest charged at the prevailing rate**. Although the period over which payment can be completed is set each year by the Council, the following are the time periods as they currently exist:
 - a. **Paving, Water, Wastewater and Repaving Districts** **20 years**
 - b. **Ornamental Lighting and Sidewalk Districts** **5 years**
 - c. **Grading and Graveling Districts** **3 years**

The interest rate on the unpaid balance is set by the City Council at the time the assessment is levied.